

Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie.

HOMILETIC MAGAZINE.

51. Jahrgang.

August 1927.

Nr. 8.

Sermon Study for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

(Synodical Conference Series.)

MATT. 21, 33—46.

Having a definite text for his sermon, the expository preacher has well begun and is half done if Horace's *Dimidium facti, qui coepit, habet* (Ep. I, 2, 40) is applicable to sermon-writing. And what a masterly, superb text we have here! First the parable with its strong contrasts of characters, vv. 33—39, then the appeal for a verdict upon the wicked vine-dressers, v. 40, the only verdict possible or thinkable under the circumstances, v. 41, a sudden, unlooked-for parabolic quotation from the unassailable source, the Old Testament Scriptures, v. 42, and, last of all, the doom of perverse, obstinate rejecters of grace, of divine goodness, foretold, vv. 43, 44, and — incredible perverseness! — defiantly approached, vv. 45, 46. Not only is our text a literary unit, it is also unsurpassed in dramatic structure, with a climax of obstinate, perverse wickedness in the parable itself, v. 39, — in reading the text, make a rather long pause here, — and a second climax of actual perverseness in the self-condemned objects of the parabolic attack, v. 46. What more could the expository preacher desire in a text? To be sure, it is a difficult, a very difficult, text to preach on; but for our comfort be it said that the parable immediately following, Matt. 22, 1—14, is even more difficult.

Dealing with a parable always demands such questions as: What is a parable? An adequate definition has never been given. — To whom, "at" or against, before and concerning whom, is it spoken? What is its aim, its teaching objective? Where, when, under what circumstances, conditions, and provocations was it spoken? Without such understanding of details much misunderstanding is the inevitable result.

Names. — This parable, of which the remainder of the text is part and parcel, has been variously named: The wicked or evil husbandmen; the rebellious vine-dressers; the householder or the owner demanding fruit from his vineyard; the householder and his heir;

the husbandmen and the heir; or simply, the parable of the vineyard. These very attempts at naming it sufficiently suggest the wealth of thought, of *basic Scriptural ideas*, contained in it and its sequence, vv. 40—46.

Classification.—As to its imagery, our text is one of the so-called vineyard parables. Cf. Luke 13, 6—9; Matt. 20, 1—16; 21, 28—32. It will stimulate interest in the text if already at this point we look up “vine” and “vineyard” in our concordance, preferably Young’s. What a host of references!—Considered as to chronology and content, it classifies as one of the five parables delivered during Passion Week at Jerusalem, all five treating of Judgment and the consummation of the kingdom.

“Hear another parable.” This brief introduction to our text at once constrains us to inquire about the context. “Hear”—how significant! They—His listeners at that moment—and we are to hear the prophet like unto Moses. Did *they* hearken? Will *we* hearken? Deut. 18, 15—19. “Another parable.” Ἄλλην is another in number, not in kind or quality, which would be ἐτέραν. The quality, the import of what we are going to be told, is the same as of that which precedes, *viz.*, the parable of the two sons, a parable of insincere non-doing over and against John the Baptist’s “Repent ye,” while our parable treats of misdoing, a companion-picture, but of infinitely wider scope and severer lines. The two parables ought to be carefully read and compared at this point. We note especially that these two parables are preceded by the question so often asked, “But what think ye?” V. 28. We have here, then, another instance of “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee,” Luke 19, 22, and: “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” Luke 12, 57.

The succeeding context in Matthew is the parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son or of the Royal Marriage-feast, which we read at this point to see how it advances in its thought and application. Note especially: “The king destroyed those murderers and burned up their city,” and the guest without the wedding garment, both wonderfully minute prophecies. Matt. 22, 1—14.

But somehow we feel that we need still more of the context before we “sense” the full scope of our text. To our joy we find that Mark (12, 1—12) and Luke (20, 9—19) have our parable and, at least in part, its sequence. But neither Mark nor Luke has the immediately preceding and succeeding context of parables given in Matthew. Accordingly, the section embracing our text, of all the events of Passion Week, is of the greatest importance, for it is found three times in the synoptic gospels. Whenever this is the case, we must at once inquire after the context common to all three writers; for above all we want to know all we can in regard to the “setting” of our sacred text. In all three synoptic gospels we previously have the

challenge of Jesus' authority by the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Mark now how the "But what think ye?" Matt. 21, 28, gains in significance. The enemies of Christ, whose opposition has been steadily increasing from their first meeting with Him, were trying to put Jesus on the defensive with the question regarding "authority." Jesus having silenced them with His quite unexpected counter-question regarding the origin, or source, of John's "baptism" (= "ministry"), now takes the offensive, "But what think ye?"

The immediately succeeding context, common to all three synop- tists, is just as easily established. It consists of the entangling question put to Jesus by the disciples of the very men addressed in our text together with the Herodians: "What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?" Matt. 22, 15—22; Mark 12, 13—17; Luke 20, 20—26. This context ought to be read now in order that one may notice the attitudes of the men toward Jesus after He had addressed the words of our parable to them.

Having studied our context, we next, in spirit, place ourselves in the Temple at Jerusalem, remembering that it is Tuesday of the last week of Jesus' ministry in the State of Humiliation. We read our text in English. We want to observe carefully whether our present-day hearers will readily and easily grasp its language and imagery, as did the audience of Jesus 1900 years ago; for as preachers we should aim to speak as Jesus did, of whom Mark says in the very chapter in which this parable is recorded that "the common people" (*ὁ πᾶς ὄχλος* = the great multitude, the mass of the people) "heard Him gladly," listened to Him with delight. Mark 12, 37. There is the householder, the vineyard with the wine-press and wine-vat (Mark) dug in it, and its tower; then there are husbandmen, simply *γεωργοί*, not, as in Luke 13, 7, *ἀμπελωνργοί*, vine-dressers, and "builders," and the stone, *λίθος* (NB. not *πέτρα*, as, for instance, Matt. 16, 18), and "the head of the corner," and finally even the heir and his inheritance. All these are terms which our audience does not "sense" and understand as readily as Jesus' hearers did, *i. e.*, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders of the people, — in other words, the Sanhedrin, — and "the people." See Luke 20, 1. 9. Hence we need to study these terms at this point of our preparation, and perhaps it will be advisable to decide right now to *retell* in one way or another — in the introduction or in the course of the sermon — the whole text or at least the parable, adding such details as appear requisite for the easy, quick, and thorough understanding of what Jesus says here. Good-speed's translation of our text and its parallels is admirable, *meā humili sententiā* at least. In such cases, where the many "foreign" ideas necessitate a retelling or paraphrasing, we need not read the entire text. V. 33, or v. 40, or vv. 43. 44, or larger portions would suffice.

What is the next "labor in the Word and doctrine"? 1 Tim. 5, 17. We next note the most important parallels for "vine," "vineyard," and "stone." If any one doubts the unity of the Bible, here is your opportunity to cure him of his doubt. For "vineyard," though the viewpoint is not exactly identical, Is. 5, 1—7, with its subsequent six "woes" (cp. the "woes" in Matt. 23) and Ps. 80, 9—17 yield rich results. The minuteness and unity of these prophecies of divine judgment deserved by Israel are all but baffling, not to say uncanny. Verily, God spake by the prophets, and in our text He is speaking by His Son. Heb. 1, 1, 2. All other explanations as to the origin of the Bible are not only perversions of the facts in the case, but ridiculous failures in explaining. For "stone" we have Ps. 118, 22, 23, quoted *ad LXX* in the text, and v. 44 is, to say the least, plainly reminiscent of Dan. 2, 34, 35, 44, 45, and especially of Is. 8, 14, 15. In addition, we note Is. 28, 16; Acts 4, 11; Rom. 9, 33; 1 Cor. 10, 4; Eph. 2, 20—22; 1 Pet. 2, 6—8.

Looking at the Greek original of our text, we observe how few variants there are. The only feature worthy of note under textual criticism is that v. 44, which is found, though with verbal differences, also Luke 20, 18, is omitted by some ancient authorities, wherefore Nestle and Westcott-Hort bracket it, while Tischendorf relegates it to the margin. But since it stands undisputed in Luke, we need not lose any time in following the devious and dark ways of textual critics.

One more preliminary preparation. The doctrinal importance of our text is inestimable even at first glance. How *lucē clariū* it teaches the deity, the divine sonship, of Christ, and *ipsissimis verbis* at that! The only Son, the Son of God in the unique sense, calls all His predecessors in the prophetic office *δοῦλους*, slaves, bond-servants, but places Himself at an immense elevation above them as the beloved Son of the Householder, and, lest we overlook it, the sole Heir of His possessions, or, as Heb. 1, 2 has it, "the appointed heir of all things." It presents, incidentally, the *species facti* for the impending trial before the Sanhedrin. Furthermore we have here, as already in Is. 5, 1—7, the irrefutable evidence for Israel's national rejection. The pride, the self-sufficiency, and the self-righteousness of the carnal heart are here revealed in their worst stages — the murder of Christ. The wickedly obstinate and persistently perverse heart of carnal man versus the patient appeals and persistent calls of divine grace to repentance are portrayed by the Master, the Teacher of teachers in the Church, in a most superb manner. There is only one cause for that greatest tragedy in the history of nations, the rejection of the Jewish nation as a nation, and it is to be found only and alone in the heart of man and not in the heart of God; for otherwise God's "glory" would be no "glory." Finally, we note the definition of the

Church in this passage: a nation, a people bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom of God. V. 41.

We are now ready to study the fourteen verses of the sacred text before us individually.

V. 33. There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard. Mark and Luke simply say: "A certain man planted a vineyard." We are at once reminded of Gen. 9, 20: "Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard," and of Gen. 2, 8, 15: The Lord God planted a garden and put the man into the garden, etc. The details of the construction of the vineyard are omitted in Luke, while Is. 5, 2, on which the description is evidently based, adds one or two items, *e. g.*, "gathered out the stones," which, in view of the Stone in vv. 42 and 44 of our text, is of value for the purpose of emphasizing the minute familiarity of the Lord's audience with all the imagery employed by Him. This vineyard, the most valued of agricultural possessions among the Jews, "the lord of the vineyard," v. 40, "let out," ἐξέδωκε, on what mode of tenure, whether by the metayer or another system, is absolutely of no consequence as far as the "point" of the parable is concerned. The lord then "went into a far country," — so also Matt. 25, 14, — but, literally, simply "went into another or foreign country," "went abroad," "for a long time," adds Luke.

Theophylact (ca. 1075) interprets: "The householder is God. . . . The vineyard is the people of the Jews, planted by God in the Land of Promise. The hedge is the Law, which hindered them from mingling with the nations. The wine-press is the altar of sacrifice; the tower, the Temple; the husbandmen, the teachers of the people, *i. e.*, the Pharisees and scribes. And the Householder [God] departed when He no longer spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud; or, perhaps, the departure of God is His long-suffering; for God seems to sleep and to be in a far country when He is long-suffering, and does not call men to account for their sins the moment they are committed." Others have understood the vineyard to signify the theocracy with all its advantages and privileges; the hedge, circumcision; the tower, the prophetic institution or — what is less likely — the Davidic kingdom. We refer to these interpretations merely to warn against the tendency of attempting to explain each and every particular in a parable; for it only results in very doubtful identifications. Thus, to interpret the tower as the monarchy would actually be ridiculous; and, what is more, it only slows up the action and the marvelous sweep toward the climax in this parable. Whatever elaborations may be made, let them primarily serve to bring out to the present-day hearers the associations of ideas on the part of Christ's audience. As to the correct interpretation of "vineyard," note that the text itself supplies it; *viz.*, in v. 43 it represents the kingdom of God among the Old Testament Israelites. See Rom. 9, 4.

Vv. 33—36 portray the continued sending of servants (prophets) by God and the barbarous and truculent treatment in each instance accorded them by the husbandmen — a manner of treatment, by the way, highly improbable in the natural sphere. Mark's account of the "sendings" is most detailed, while the gradation in indignities is well marked in Luke: beating; beating with shameful handling; ejection with wounding, culminating in murder in the case of the son. "God began, ca. 430 years after the Exodus, to send His prophets and continued even till John the Baptist" (Alford); but Israel *κατὰ σάρα* persecuted the prophets, cast them out, and put them to death. According to their own tradition the Jews sawed Isaiah asunder and stoned Jeremiah. Cf. also the prophets cut off by Jezebel in the days of Elijah, Ahab's treatment of Micaiah, the conspiracy against Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, 2 Chron. 24, 20—22, who was stoned to death. See also Neh. 9, 26. 30; Matt. 23, 31. 37; the Gospel (ancient pericopal series) for 10th Sunday after Trinity; Heb. 11, 36—38. But the clearest and most comprehensive historical summary of this part of our parable we find, to our surprise, perhaps, 2 Chron. 36, 15. 16; a truly remarkable coincidence. Yet in no commentary have I found this parallel here.

Vv. 37—39. Luke at this point portrays the lord of the vineyard deliberating, "What shall I do?" which serves to make the next step taken appear as something extraordinary, as it is indeed; for what householder in the natural sphere would not long ago have retaliated? In Mark the son is the only person left to send. Alluding more directly to Is. 5, 1, the one son is called by Mark his well-beloved, by Luke "my beloved son." "They will reverence my son." It is assumed they will have no difficulty in knowing him, neither have they, *ιδόντες*. "This He said, not as if they would do so, for He knew they would not, but to point out what they ought to do." (Euthymius, † ca. 1118.) Again we have quoted merely to disapprove. Recognizing him, the heir, whose is the inheritance, they nevertheless defiantly resolve: "Come now, let us slay him," just as Joseph's brothers did. The Greek is identical with the LXX at Gen. 37, 20. This very resolution had already actually been taken by the Pharisees immediately after Christ's manifestation of His power as Son of God in raising Lazarus as a result of Caiaphas's prophecy. John 11, 53; 12, 10. But note that this was done "secretly"; the "people" did not know of their decision; Pilate, however, knew the real motive; he "knew that for envy (*διὰ φθόνον*) they had delivered Him." Matt. 27, 18.

Up to v. 38, accordingly, the parable is history; from v. 39 onward it is prophecy. The somber culmination of the husbandmen's wicked opposition: the son outside the vineyard slain. But three

days later Jesus was led outside the city and crucified "without the gate."

Vv. 40. 41. While the action of the parable is confined to a single season, the messengers following close upon each other, yet every hearer and reader will feel that all means have been tried to obtain fruit from the husbandmen for the lord of the vineyard. "He looked for justice, but, behold, oppression, violence, or shedding of blood." Is. 5, 7b. So nothing but judgment was now left. But the verdict, the sentence, the judgment, is extorted from the Pharisees' own lips. The self-condemnation reminds of Matt. 27, 25. In their answer they do not specify who the new tenants will be, which would be *οἱ*, identifying, but only of what sort they will be, *οἵτινες*, classifying, "of a kind who" will render him the fruits. We note, merely in passing, the classical language in v. 41a: *κακούς κακῶς ἀπολέσει αὐτούς*. Mark and Luke are content with a simpler "style" in this case. We have our own ideas about classical style and classicists. At any rate, we would not ecstatically exclaim here: "*En Graeci sermonis peritiam in Matthaeo!*" as if Matthew's style as such were not "classical." The Vulgate renders well: *Malos male perdet*; still better would be: *Pessimos pessime perdet*. R. V. aptly: "He will miserably destroy those miserable men."

In view of the evidence presented against the husbandmen v. 41 of our text gives the only verdict at all possible. Mark and Luke, omitting *λέγουσιν αὐτῷ*, appear to put the words into Christ's mouth. The verdict was undoubtedly *hypocritically* spoken by the Pharisees, in which case Mark and Luke assume that the reader will so understand it, or Jesus may have repeated the verdict *sincerely*. Hearing the verdict, the people, who also were present, Luke 20, 9, exclaim: *Μὴ γένοιτο!* Luke 20, 16, which occurs only here in all of the gospels. The people are unable to contemplate the doom pronounced on the husbandmen, and indeed the doom is terrible enough to cause any one to exclaim: *Μὴ γένοιτο!*

V. 42. While Luke here adds a little human touch by portraying Jesus as *ἐμβλέψας αὐτοῖς*, looking intently upon them, thus giving impressiveness to what Jesus is going to say in reply, we have the quotation from Ps. 118 introduced differently by each evangelist. Matthew: "Did ye never read in the Scriptures?" Mark: "Have ye not read this scripture?" Luke: "What is this, then, that is written?" In this entire section of Matthew we cannot help noticing a certain peculiar urgency and strong emotion, indicated by quick, abrupt, brief transitions — v. 28: "But what think ye?" V. 33: "Hear another parable"; here: "Did ye never read in the Scriptures?" Everything is moving on step by step toward judgment.

The words quoted by Jesus are rather strikingly taken from the same psalm of triumph which furnished the text for the people's and

the children's hosannas sung two days previously. Matt. 21, 9. 15. There the Lord called the chief priests' and scribes' attention to Ps. 8, 2; here He reminds them of Ps. 118, 22. 23. Luke quotes only v. 22. This verse is quoted with the same interpretation Acts 4, 11, with the exception that a different verb is used for "rejected"; and again 1 Pet. 2, 6. 7, where also a cognate passage, Is. 28, 16, is quoted as in Rom. 9, 33 (*ad LXX*). Note that the oracle does not indicate the fate, the doom, of the builders, but rather the unexpected turn in the fortunes of the rejected and despised Stone. This quotation from Ps. 118 was the advance notice to Jesus' enemies that, though they might reject and kill Him, yet in the end He would be victorious. The "head of the corner" is the most important position in a building, so that Christ presents Himself as the foundation upon which the kingdom of God was to be built up in spite of His rejection by the Jews. From and through the Lord it, *viz.*, the rejected Stone, became this very thing, *αὐτή*, *i. e.*, the "head of the corner." For "marvelous in our eyes" see a concrete instance Acts 4, 13. 14. — The change in similitude or figure is not as abrupt as some interpreters have thought. In the final pressing of the grapes a large beam was laid upon them and weighted down by large stones to insure the extraction of all the juice. Remembering also that in the planting of the vineyard the stones had to be removed from the ground, Is. 5, 2, we can understand how readily and naturally the stone supplied the symbol for the rejection of the Son and for His judgment.

V. 43. *Διὰ τοῦτο* introduces the application of the parabolic oracle in plain, unmistakable language, implying that the parties addressed are "the builders." What is going to happen? "The kingdom of God," which has been represented up to this point as "the vineyard," will be taken from them, *ἀρθήσεται*, — same verb as John 1, 29, *αἶρω*, — and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, *viz.*, of the kingdom of God. Note well that the *ἔθνος* is not defined beyond that. The change is not from the Jews in general to the Gentiles in general with the former altogether excluded, but to a people truly faithful, to *an ἔθνος ἄγιον*, the *λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν* of 1 Pet. 2, 9 and Acts 15, 14; in other words, to the Church, which consists of believing Jews and Gentiles, who bring forth the fruits demanded by God. For "Christ is called the Corner-stone, because, as the corner-stone unites in itself two walls, so also Christ unites in Himself two peoples, the Gentiles and the Jews, and by faith makes them one." (Euthymius.)

V. 44. This verse is found also in Luke's account, 20, 18. Whence this peculiar "image," and what does it mean? The words are an unmistakable reference to Is. 8, 14. 15 and Dan. 2, 34. 35. 44. 45 and a plain identification of the stone there mentioned with that in Ps. 118. The "Stone" in this verse represents the whole kingdom and power of the Messiah summed up in Himself. Looking at the

statement without attempting to interpret it, we notice that a distinction is made: Whosoever shall fall on this stone, which is laid, as it were, in the way, shall be broken; *συνθλάω* = to break in pieces, to shatter; Vulgate: *confringetur*; Luke: *conquassabitur*. On the other hand, on whomsoever it shall fall, him it will grind to powder, — certainly a still more terrible result than before; *λεμνάω*, from *λεμός*, a winnowing fork or fan, = to winnow, to scatter like chaff, here implying reduction to dust; Vulgate: *conteret*; Luke: *comminuet*. We note next that the statement is individualized, whereas in the preceding verse the nation was spoken of. Wetstein remarks: "He who falls upon a great stone is bruised indeed, but can be healed; but he upon whom a great stone falls, is ground, as it were, to dust, like the chaff that is scattered to the winds." Matt. 11, 6 we read: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Hence, whosoever shall be offended in Jesus is not blessed or truly happy; rather, he is very unhappy, just as a person who is hurt in limb, broken physically, is unhappy. But as long as the stone is lying passive, as it were, there is hope for the bruised one who has stumbled; he may rise again. Cf. Luke 2, 34. Thus many who stumbled at Jesus because of His humiliation were recovered by His glorious resurrection. So there is hope for all who may fall upon the Stone. But alas! for those who, having stumbled and fallen, do not, as Peter did, repent and rise from their fall. Upon all such the Stone will fall and hopelessly grind them to powder. Cf. Matt. 12, 31. 32.

Vv. 45. 46. What Jesus had said caused the Pharisees to perceive that He had spoken concerning them, or, as Luke has it, *πρὸς αὐτοὺς*, with reference to themselves. That much only do the evangelists say about the perception of the Pharisees. Note, however, in Mark, *ἔγνωσαν*, predicated of the Synedrists, not of the *ὄχλος*, which gives the reason at once for their desire to lay hold on Jesus and for their fear of the people. Such was their state of mind. They fear not God, but only the multitude. Yet He who has aimed His parables at them is regarded by the people as a prophet. Hence only for the sake of appearances do they act as they do. In reality they were eager to apprehend Jesus on the spot, thus boldly and defiantly doing the very thing against which Jesus had just solemnly warned them.

We submit the following propositions and parts: *The Central Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. 1) The Son of God rejected and slain by men. 2) Exalted by God to be Head and Heir of all things. — *Two Mysteries in the Kingdom of God*. 1) The mystery of human perverseness and obstinacy. 2) The mystery of divine patience and love of sinners. — *Christ the Sole Heir of God*. 1) Envied and hated by the self-righteous. 2) Believed on, and loved by, penitent sinners. — *Jesus the Son of God*. 1) His person. 2) His mission. —

The Person and Work of Christ. 1) In humiliation; 2) in exaltation. — *The Kingdom of God in Our Midst.* 1) Viewed as the highest privilege; 2) viewed as to its responsibilities. — *Jesus the Son of God.* 1) Greater than all the prophets. 2) Victorious over all His enemies.

Los Angeles, Cal.

O. W. WISMAR.

Outlines on Old Testament Texts.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

JER. 23, 21—32.

A. a. In our Gospel-lesson for to-day our Savior warns us: "Beware of false prophets!" That warning was necessary at His time. The Pharisees and Sadducees. b. That warning is necessary to-day. 1) Antichristian cults; 2) Modernistic churches; 3) erring Christian churches. c. In our day, too, false prophets appear in the same manner as in the time of Christ: 1) "in sheep's clothing"; 2) saying: Matt. 7, 22. d. Also in our day false prophets are known by their fruits, that is, their false doctrines, which are contrary to God's Word. Examples. e. Also in our day false prophets are "ravening wolves." f. To this day God's fierce anger rests upon all false prophets: "Hewn down and cast into the fire." — B. a. To-day, too, false prophets are esteemed by the ungodly. Examples. b. Faithful pastors, who preach God's Word, are hated and persecuted because of their "intolerance," which means, because of their faithful testimony to the truth. c. When falsehood is attacked, even many Christians are offended. Let us beware of our evil flesh! God's Word stigmatizes false prophets and demands of faithful preachers that they expose their errors. This is the lesson of the text. Let us consider: —

FALSE PROPHETS.

1. *How they come.* 2. *How they teach.* 3. *How they destroy.*
4. *How God will destroy them.*

1.

How they come. A. a. *Without a divine commission.* Text: "I have not sent these prophets." V. 21. True prophets come in Christ's name. Matt. 28, 20. False prophets come in the devil's name, John 8, 44; in their own name, v. 26: "Prophets of the deceit of their own heart." b. They come *without the divine Word.* V. 21: "I have not spoken to them." c. They come *zealously.* V. 21: "They ran"; they are diligent in their vicious work. "They prophesied"; they declare their false doctrines publicly without fear. d. They come *hypocritically.* V. 30: "That steal My words every one from his

neighbor," that is, "they borrow from their neighbors, the true prophets, certain forms and phrases, which they mix with their own vain imaginations." Cp. also v. 28: "What is the chaff to the wheat?" Meaning: What has the chaff to do with the wheat? Why mingle human teachings with God's Word?

B. a. To-day false prophets come in the very same way, without a divine commission, without God's Word, zealously and hypocritically. 1) Literature sent to our homes; 2) proselyters rap at our doors; 3) some use the dailies; 4) some invite us to attend other churches. b. "Beware of false prophets which come to you *in sheep's clothing!*" 2 Tim. 3, 6; 2 John 10.

2.

How they teach. A. a. As if there were no God who is aware of their evil deeds. Vv. 23. 24. By denying the truth and preaching falsehoods, they make God a liar. With brazen effrontery they dethrone God and Christ. Ps. 2, 1—3. b. They prophesy lies *in God's name*. Vv. 25. 26. Denying the true God and His holy Word, they nevertheless piously use God's name to cover their deceit. Christian Science, Romanism, Modernism, Rationalism. c. Their doctrines are vain speculations, based upon their own evil heart. V. 25: "I have dreamed, I have dreamed." "Christian consciousness; experience, new revelations." d. They blasphemously ascribe their false doctrines to God. V. 31: "He saith."

B. a. False prophets, then, preach their own evil teachings, ascribe them to God, cover and adorn them with God's name; and yet, by their false teachings they challenge God and provoke Him to eternal wrath. b. Romanism, Calvinism, enthusiasm. c. Let us beware! Matt. 24, 11; Mark 13, 22. "Beware of false prophets; . . . inwardly they are *ravening wolves*."

3.

How they destroy. A. a. "They cause My people to forget *My name* by their dreams," etc. V. 27. Explain. False prophets lead the people away from the true Lord, their true Savior, their true Sanctifier, just as in the Old Testament they led them from Jehovah to Baal. *God* is set aside by false prophets. b. False prophets lead sinners away from *God's saving Word*. V. 32: "That prophesy false dreams and do tell them and cause My people to err by their lies and by their lightness." 2 Tim. 2, 17 f. c. The result is that sinners are not saved from the awful consequences of their sins. V. 22b. Through false doctrine men are hopelessly ruined.

B. a. If we consider these terrible effects of the perversion of truth and the promulgation of false doctrine, we must shudder at the horrible spread of false doctrine in our time. False prophets are the

greatest criminals, since they murder souls redeemed by Christ's blood. b. Alas! also many Christians view them with tolerance; but consider: they lead men away from the true God, from His saving Word, into hell and eternal damnation. Beware of false prophets!

4.

How God will destroy them. A. a. God tolerates them for a while, but He knows them and hears their blasphemies. Vv. 24. 25. He suffers people to be misled as punishment of their ingratitude, unbelief, and wickedness. 2 Thess. 2, 11. b. Yet in His great wrath He has marked them for destruction. V. 26. In His great wrath He yields them to ever greater errors. Jude 4. 8. 10. 16; 2 Pet. 2, 18—22. c. Their destruction is sure and swift. Vv. 31. 32: "I am against them." 2 Pet. 2, 1—13; Rev. 19, 20; 20, 10.

B. a. Let us not be deceived by false prophets, their eloquence, their great success, and their arrogant boasting. God hates them and those who follow them; and because their damnation is sure, He has graciously warned us against them. b. Let us listen to God's true prophets, who preach His Word, and receive their divine message into good and faithful hearts. True preachers are God's greatest gift, for He desires that His Word be preached in truth and purity. V. 28. c. Let us, then, thank God for having preserved His pure Word unto us, and let us gladly hear and learn it to His glory and to our salvation. And since falsehood is being spread everywhere to-day, let us spread the sacred message of salvation that many may come and be saved.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Ex. 32, 1—14.

The most important subject in religion is the forgiveness of sins. Sin and grace constitute the principal concern of all Christian thought.

With this in mind and according to the divine pedagogy taught Rom. 15, 4; 1 Cor. 10, 11, we must also approach and ponder our text, which records one of Israel's ten provocations of God's wrath during the people's wilderness wanderings. Num. 14, 22. The record of this sin and its forgiveness is repeated Deut. 9, 7—29, and reference is made to it again and again. Cf. Ps. 106, 19—23; Neh. 9, 18; 1 Cor. 10, 7; Acts 7, 39 ff.

Because of the prominence, in the sacred records, of this sin of Israel and because of its many lessons we shall consider:—

ISRAEL'S GRIEVOUS SIN AT MOUNT SINAI AND GOD'S MERCIFUL FORGIVENESS.

1. Israel's grievous sin.
2. God's merciful forgiveness.

1.

To estimate the seriousness of Israel's sin at Mount Sinai, we must remember what precedes, *viz.*, the signs and wonders in Egypt, the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, the quails, manna, water from the rock, the successful war against Amalek, the giving of the Law, Moses even now in the mount receiving directions concerning the Tabernacle. What wonderful blessings! Yet Israel lapses into most grievous idolatry.

a. V. 1. The occasion for it — Moses' long absence on the mount. Moses delayed, *lit.*, caused shame, *i. e.*, disappointment; same idiom Judg. 5, 28 (*lit.*, "Why doth his chariot put to shame in coming?"). — Its perverseness: "This Moses," the man that brought, etc. A wicked perversion of an incontrovertible fact: God, not Moses, had brought them out. Ex. 20, 2. — Its rebellious demand: "Up, make us gods!" — better, a god. See Neh. 9, 18. The Law, given but recently, said: "Thou shalt not make," etc. Ex. 20, 4—6 (Deut. 4, 15—19; 5, 8—10). The prohibition is all-inclusive: no images of God, who, as a spiritual Being, as Jehovah, the Self-existent One, cannot be represented by any material likeness. The nature of Israel's grievous sin is, as is the case with all sins, transgression of the Law. 1 John 3, 4.

b. Vv. 2. 3. The sinful resolve of a people finds a willing official to execute the deed. Aaron's ready consent is due, most likely, to the impetuosity of the people. Instead of the invisible, spiritual leadership of Jehovah they want a god who may act as their visible leader, an image of gold, made by man's hands, to represent Jehovah. V. 5. How enthusiastic and eager they are in their wicked resolve! V. 3. How willingly the sinner serves sin!

c. V. 4. The glory of the incorruptible God is changed by them not into an image made like to corruptible man; no, their depraved mind changes it to a four-footed beast! Rom. 1, 23. In their hearts they turned back to Egypt. Acts 7, 39.* The thousands of golden earrings are melted down and cast into the shape of a calf, a young bull. (How large the image was and whether it was of solid gold ["molten"?] or consisted of a wooden core overlaid with gold, Scripture does not tell us.) The Hebrew *egel* = a young bull; the fem-

* Even if Philo had not said it, Acts 7, 39 proves conclusively that they had learned from the Egyptians to represent Jehovah by the figure of a bull; for in Egypt the bull Apis was revered in the temple at Heliopolis as the incarnation of Osiris, and the bull Mnevis, in the temple of Ptah at Memphis, as the incarnation of the sun god. The Egyptians, however, according to tradition, worshiped only the living animals, not images of them. — In regard to the bull symbolism — vigor, strength, endurance, Num. 23, 22 — confer the oxen which supported Solomon's molten sea, or those which ornamented the panels of the bases of the lavers in the Temple. 1 Kings 7, 25. 29.

inine, *eglah* = a young cow, "heifer." The *eglah* might be three years old, Gen. 15, 9; give milk, Is. 7, 21; or plow, Judg. 14, 18. Hence *egel* does not necessarily mean an animal as young as a calf. In Ps. 106, 20 it is called an ox, *shor*. — This molten image, fashioned with a graving-tool, is thy god, O Israel? Thus they exchanged *their glory* for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass. Thus they *forgot God*, their Savior! Ps. 106, 20, 21. How soon they fell after being told from Sinai by God Himself: Ex. 20, 4—6! (Neh. 9, 18 has the singular in Hebrew: "This is thy god.")

d. Vv. 5, 6. Aaron, seeing the impression the image makes upon Israel, at once builds an altar before it and proclaims a feast to *Jehovah* on the following day. This proclamation plainly shows that the calf is regarded, not as exclusive of *Jehovah*, but as representing Him. Burnt offerings and peace-offerings are brought. The people bow down and serve the molten image, thus adding a new sin. Ex. 20, 5. Notice their eagerness again: "They rose up early." V. 6b is quoted by St. Paul 1 Cor. 10, 7. They rose up to play, sing, dance (vv. 18, 19 of text-chapter). They were "broken loose"; Aaron had "let them loose" (A.V., "naked," "made naked"). V. 25. The orgy about the idol, which could not see or speak, reveals the extent of their idolatry. They forgot God. Ps. 106, 21. (The entire episode underlies Paul's warning concerning the Lord's Table. 1 Cor. 10, 16 ff. This sin of idolatry at Mount Sinai, reaching its climax in the wild orgy, was, as is all sin, the work of Satan. It is utterly impossible to explain Israel's hideous lapse into idolatry in any other way.)

Such was Israel's terrible sin at the very foot of Mount Sinai. What does it prove? It proves how *abjectly* we can all fall into idolatry if we forget God, our Savior, Ps. 106, 21, set aside His commands, and listen to the seductions of Satan, 1 Cor. 10, 12, 14. Let him that thinketh he standeth, remember the many lapses into idolatry recorded in the Bible. Thus Jeroboam I, first king of the Northern Kingdom, instituted the calf worship, setting up two calves, one at Bethel and the other at Dan. 1 Kings 12, 28—33. (He, too, had seen the sacred bull Apis worshiped in Egypt while a refugee at Shishak's court. 1 Kings 11, 40. In recommending the calves, he quotes Ex. 32, 4.)

Application. — As David's individual sin is minutely described, 2 Sam. 11, for our admonition, so Israel's first lapse into idolatry is narrated with all its details as a warning for God's people at all times. Apply 1 Cor. 10, 16 ff.

2.

We return in spirit to Mount Sinai. There stands the molten image, mute, speechless. Aaron, faithless weakling, did not protest against the idolatrous people's demand. Moses in the mount knows not what is going on below. But God knows. The Holy One of

Israel tells Moses, the mediator between God and His people, how great a sin Israel has committed. Text, vv. 7. 8.

a. V. 10. How does this sin of a "stiff-necked people" (Ex. 33, 3. 5; 34, 9; Deut. 31, 27; 10, 16; Jer. 7, 26; 17, 23; 19, 15; 2 Kings 17, 14; Neh. 9, 16. 17. 29; 2 Chron. 30, 8; 36, 13), of a rebellious, obstinate race, whose neck is an iron sinew, whose brow is like brass, Is. 48, 4, — how does its awful sin affect God, whose holy will had just recently been revealed to them from the mount? "Let Me alone," the Lord says to Moses, "that My wrath may wax hot against them," etc. If God is a holy God, sin is sure to arouse His wrath, anger, and displeasure, and to cause Him to visit His just punishment upon unrepentant transgressors, both temporal and eternal. "Our God is a consuming fire," is not only Old Testament, but also New Testament doctrine. Heb. 12, 29. — Of Moses, who has not joined in the idolatry, God will make a great nation. (An offer repeated with greater inducement Num. 14, 12.) God, who is able to raise up children unto Abraham out of stones, Matt. 3, 9, could easily have done this and yet remained a God of truth, faithful to His word, and no man could have accused Him of having treated Israel unjustly.

b. What is going to happen? Moses does not let God alone (cf. Jacob, Gen. 32, 22—32), nor does he accept the offer God made to him. For he loves his people, and so he makes entreaty for them. (Cf. Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18, 16—33.) — Text, vv. 11—13. Not a word of their great sin, not a word of their stiff-necked rebellion, is found in Moses' intercession. According to the Law revealed to them, Ex. 20—23, the people *deserve* but one thing: destruction, rejection, consuming fire. But Moses is not basing his intercession — in fact, he cannot base it — upon the Law, which is inexorable in its demands. According to our text Moses, in his intercession, urges *four* motives for mercy, for divine forbearance: —

1) Israel is God's, Jehovah's, people, not Moses' people; He redeemed them, not Moses (*contra*: vv. 1. 7).

2) Jehovah delivered them "with great power." V. 11b.

3) God's honor (on earth, among men) is at stake; for the enemy of God's people, the Egyptians, will mock if Israel perishes. V. 12.

4) God's oath to the patriarchs, confirming His covenant with, and promise to, them. V. 13. Note this most remarkable reference of Moses to Gen. 22, 16, the only confirmation of the covenant with an oath in Genesis. (Cf. Moses' intercession at Kadesh-barnea. Num. 14, 13—19.)

(V. 14, most likely, is anticipatory and must not be interpreted as though Moses instantly knew that God had turned from His anger. We have here one of the great "silences" of the Bible.)

Having thus pleaded with God for Israel, Moses comes down from the mount. Describe briefly the events given vv. 15—29. Note that *all* are given an opportunity to repent, to return to the Lord. V. 26a. — And now Moses returns to intercede for his people and particularly for Aaron, Deut. 9, 20, for all of forty days and forty nights, Deut. 9, 25. Cf. v. 18; the same length of time spent in the mount for the purpose of receiving the pattern of the Tabernacle. Ex. 24, 17. Both times he neither ate bread nor drank water. Ex. 34, 28; Deut. 9, 9, 18. Note the new features added in this intercession: a) the confession, "This people have sinned a great sin"; b) the self-effacing prayer: v. 32. Cf. St. Paul's wish. Rom. 9, 3.

c. Thus Moses interceded for God's people. Ps. 106, 23. Did his intercession turn the wrath of God? Text, v. 14. The Lord repented of the evil, etc. An anthropopathy, *i. e.*, an attribution to God of human feelings, or emotions. ("He who would speak intelligibly to *finite* comprehension of the *infinite* God must use anthropomorphisms and anthropopathies. The difference is not of kind, but of degree." *Unity of the Book of Genesis*, by W. H. Green, p. 33.) See Gen. 6, 7; Judg. 2, 18; 1 Sam. 15, 11, 35; 2 Sam. 24, 16, *al.* Jehovah's people had broken the covenant, sealed by blood; they had broken their sacred promise. Ex. 19, 8. Thus upon the unrepentant three thousand God's judgment, executed by the sons of Levi, falls; for they continued *under the Law*. But those of Israel who repented escaped the condemnation of God; they believed God's promises of pardon and forgiveness. Remember that God's promise to Abraham antedates the Law by 430 years. Gal. 3, 17. Thus Num. 23, 19 and 1 Sam. 15, 29 are true of both the Law and the Promise. Stress Rom. 3, 3 and 11, 20, 23 here. Thus, while the episode of the molten calf reveals to us Israel's rebellious temper, which, according to the very terms of the Law, would have cost them their national existence, we learn from it also the forbearance and long-suffering of God, who graciously heard Moses' fervent intercessory prayer. Cf. the vision of Moses, Ex. 34, 6 ff., in which God Himself proclaims to him His grace, etc.

d. This doctrine of the gracious God, who forgives sin, which is foreshadowed at the foot of Mount Sinai, is found in clearer light in the New Testament. The gospels plainly show us that the Prophet like unto Moses did not principally proclaim the Law and its inexorable demands and threats, but above all the glad tidings of grace, being Himself "full of grace and truth." John 1, 14, 17. Cp. Moses' intercession with Christ's in John 17. We believers have an Advocate with the *Father*, whose propitiatory sacrifice never loses its efficacy and power. 1 John 2, 1, 2. Moses pleads a promise; Christ, who is the *fulfilment of all promises*, points to a sacrifice, His own eternal atonement. John 17, 4; Heb. 9, 19—28.

Conclusion.—If we have been guilty of any manner or form of idolatry, let us repent *to-day*. Ps. 95, 7. 8. Let us not resist the Holy Spirit, who calls us to believe in the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. By the grace of the Holy Spirit alone can we say that Jesus is the Lord. 1 Cor. 12, 3. May He, the Holy Spirit, who has spoken to us by this scripture, through its patience and comfort give us hope, even hope that maketh not ashamed!—Use as doxology Rom. 16, 25—27 or Jude 24, 25.

Los Angeles, Cal.

O. W. WISMAR.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

DEUT. 4, 23—31.

God threatens to punish. He is more willing, however, to show mercy.

“THE LORD, THY GOD, IS A MERCIFUL GOD.”

1. *In His mercy He made a covenant with His people.*
2. *In His mercy He implores them not to forget His covenant.*
3. *In His mercy He pleads with us to return to Him when the covenant is broken by us.*

1.

a. The covenant “which He made with you.” V. 23. “The covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them.” V. 31. Unto Israel pertained the Abrahamic covenant, which was sealed by circumcision. Gen. 17, 2—19; 2 Kings 13, 23; 1 Chron. 16, 15—18; Ps. 105, 9—11.

Furthermore, God adopted Israel as a nation at Mount Sinai and made a compact with them to extend to them protection, prosperity, and every blessing if they would walk in His commandments, which were deposited in the Ark of the Covenant. Deut. 5, 2; Ex. 19, 5; Deut. 9, 11; 10, 33. It is the mercy of God thus to reveal His will to mankind. He could let His children run amuck without guide or compass, without calling attention to the snares and pitfalls of sin, and to the utter temporal and eternal destruction to which it is bound to lead. Prov. 14, 34.

b. In addition to this Mosaic covenant we have the New Covenant, of which Christ is the Mediator. Jer. 31, 31—34; Heb. 8, 8—11; 2 Cor. 3, 6—11; Heb. 8, 6—13; 12, 24. God establishes this covenant and seals it to us in the Gospel and in the holy Sacraments. Not we undeserving sinners come to Him, but He, in His infinite mercy, comes to us in our distress and assures us of His good and gracious will and of His free favor in Christ. Is. 55, 1—3.

2.

a. After God, in His goodness, had taken a race of Egyptian slaves to His bosom and given them His testimonies, they, on their part, promised to be faithful to the covenant. Ex. 19, 8; 24, 3—8;

Josh. 1, 16—18. Our baptismal and confirmation vow. Confessional service. Our vows made in the dark hours, when we implored deliverance from God.

b. God implores them to be faithful, "not to forget," ever to be obedient, as they had promised. Above all they were to be faithful to their God. Obedience to the other commandments is conditioned on being in accord with the first. Where the fear, love, and trust in the one and only true God is lacking, there is no real incentive to keep the Law at all. The human heart, alas! is strangely prone to fine and gross idolatry. V. 23. Ex. 32, 1 ff.; 2 Kings 17, 7. 8. 15. Mammon-worship, dollar-worship, hero-worship, lodge-worship, deism, etc. We are to remember: Ps. 56, 11; 22, 4. 5; John 5, 23.

c. It is the mercy of God which urges us to remember the covenant, lest disaster be invited. National calamity apostate Israel brought upon itself. Vv. 25—27. The captivity of the ten tribes. 2 Kings 15, 29; 17, 5. 6. The Babylonian captivity. 2 Chron. 36, 2—7; 2 Kings 24, 11—16; 25, 2—21; Jer. 52. The tears of mercy that dim the Redeemer's eye as He foresees the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke 19, 41—48. Spiritual blindness would prevent the apostates from knowing the things that belong to their peace. V. 28. Judges 10, 13. 14; Is. 6, 9. 10; Luke 19, 42; Gal. 6, 7.

3.

With the Lord there is mercy even for the faithless. Vv. 30. 31. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Rom. 5, 20. God's heart is revealed in the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15; in the gift of His Son, Rom. 5, 8; in Christ's tears on Mount Olivet, Luke 19, 41. Though the covenant be broken on man's part, the yearning call of the merciful God follows His wayward children down the descending paths. Is. 54, 7—10; 43, 24. 25; 44, 22; 45, 20—22.

God is faithful. Are we? Ps. 139, 23 f.; Is. 55, 7.

Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

H. W. BARTELS.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

MICAH 2, 7—13.

Disasters befalling the children of men give occasion to blasphemous utterances by unbelievers. God is then pictured by them as a heartless monster, who revels in the miseries of men. In the blindness of their hearts they fail to see that God is indeed a merciful God. Our text proves it most convincingly.

OUR GOD IS A MERCIFUL GOD.

1. *He warns the wicked of the impending doom.*
2. *In a world of wickedness He is ever mindful of His believers.*

1.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. What a distinct favor of God to send two such prophets to Judah at the same time! Both preached the Law of God to the wicked fearlessly. Both proclaimed the Gospel of the coming Redeemer in all its sweetness, especially Isaiah.

But how did Judah treat the faithful prophets of God? Note v. 6. Their words were to them vain babblings. Luther's translation *traeufen* is to the point. Cp. also Ezek. 20, 46; 21, 2. Their words were to them but a steady outpouring of words. Cp. A. V. and Luther's translation of Prov. 19, 13. The prophets' warnings of the impending doom they resented as disgraceful, because therewith the messengers of God were but heaping shame upon the people, who did not consider themselves quite so wicked as the prophets described them. Cp. Amos 7, 16; Is. 30, 10. They wanted prophets such as Micah describes them in v. 11. "Walking in the spirit," *i. e.*, according to his own spirit (Luther, *Irrgeist*), or, walking according to the wind. *Den Mantel nach dem Winde haengen.*

Not only in our text, but throughout his whole book Micah inveighed against the sins of his people. (The entire book should be studied, and the history of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Micah 1, 1, should be read to obtain the proper background.) Micah mentions some of their misdoings in our text. V. 8. The people are risen up as an enemy against Jehovah. "Even of late," or yesterday. Very prompt in their defiance. Cp. Is. 63, 10; Acts 7, 51. Unwary wanderers are robbed of their most necessary belongings, although they are peace-loving men, "men averse from war." Cp. Ex. 22, 26 f. "The women of my people," v. 9, are widows. The fathers are not mentioned. Is. 10, 2. "Ye have taken away My glory forever." Difficult to interpret. Some assume that the inheritance of the children is meant, which was held to be inviolate. Cp. Num. 36, 7, 8; 1 Kings 21, 3; Ex. 22, 21 ff.; Deut. 27, 19; 24, 17.

V. 10. The Babylonian captivity is meant. The wicked had defiled the land, Jer. 2, 7; 3, 1. 2. 9, given to them by God, Deut. 12, 9, and it is now about to spue them out, Lev. 18, 25, and bring upon them a most terrible calamity. They shall suffer pangs as a woman in travail. Is. 21, 3; Jer. 4, 31.

V. 7. Still God is ready to show mercy. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" *i. e.*, is the Lord unable to show forbearance? Cp. Is. 59, 1; 50, 2. "Are these His doings?" *i. e.*, is it customary with Him to punish, or does He take delight in it? The answer: His words do good to him that walketh uprightly. God threatens to punish the people solely because of their obstinate wickedness. Hos. 7, 10.

Is our God a merciful God? Does not our text prove His patience with a rebellious nation? He warns the people repeatedly. He would have them come to their senses. He warns them early enough, for the Babylonian captivity began over a hundred years later.

Application.

2.

The sins of Judah had kindled the fiery wrath of God; but even now He did not forget His mercy. Rom. 11, 1. He was mindful of His believers, the remnant. The prophet had predicted the Babylonian disaster; but this was not to be the closing chapter in Israel's history. V. 12 (lit.): "Gather, gather, will I all of thee, O Jacob; bring together, bring together, will I the remnant of Israel." "All" he will assemble. The Lord knoweth them that are His. Rom. 11, 26; John 10, 16; 2 Tim. 2, 19. And even though it is but a remnant, yet it shall be a mighty throng, numerous as the sheep of Bozrah in Edom, a country known for its large herds of sheep. Is. 34, 6 suggests this. They shall make a great noise, raise a shout of victory. God's faithful people shall be well secured; they shall be like a flock in the midst of their fold.

And why? V. 13. Note the forceful language: "broken up," "passed through," "gone out." They are under the leadership of their Breaker, their King, their Jehovah. Is. 52, 12. This cannot refer to the return from exile, which merely prefigured the greater event here described. Christ has brought deliverance from the enemies of our souls. Is. 42, 7; Luke 4, 18. But only the remnant, the believers in Him, conquer sin, death, and the devil. Rom. 8, 37. To them the doors of the Kingdom here and yonder are opened wide. They enter cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Our God is a merciful God. He is the Savior of all men. He does not desire the death of the wicked. He delights in life and not in death. Even when He thunders His threats, He still holds out His hand of peace to His people Israel. The majority remained stiff-necked. And so He could but gather the remnant into His spiritual fold. These He gathers without fail.

Application.

B.

Entwürfe über Dan. 1—6.

(Schluß.)

Dan. 4, 25—34.

„Ich will ihnen noch Frist geben 120 Jahre“, sprach Gott von den Menschen vor der Sintflut. Aber sie ließen sich vom Geist Gottes nicht strafen. Die Sintflut nahm sie alle dahin. Israel und Juda hörten nicht auf die Warnungen der Propheten, und Israel wurde weggeführt auf Nimmerwiederkehr und Juda siebenzig Jahre lang. Jerusalem hörte

weder auf die Propheten noch auf den Sohn Gottes, und nach abermaliger vierzigjähriger Gnadenfrist blieb kein Stein auf dem andern. Nebukadnezar hatte zwölf Monate Zeit zur Buße, aber —. Kein Wort Gottes jedoch, weder Verheißung noch Drohung, fällt dahin. Sein Wort ist die absolute Wahrheit. So wundern wir uns nicht, wenn wir heute hören:

Daniels Deutung des Traumes geht buchstäblich in Erfüllung

1. in dem angekündigten Strafgericht,
2. in der gegebenen Gnadenverheißung.

1.

a. B. 25. 27. Nebukadnezar macht sich selbst zum Gözen. Das „alles“, das volle Gericht Gottes, erging über ihn. „Denn“ er legte sich göttliche Ehre bei, und das duldet Gott nicht auf die Dauer. Jes. 42, 8. Nach zwölf Monaten Gnadenzeit Lustwandelte der König auf dem Dach seines Palastes, und sein Auge ergözte sich an dem wundervoll prächtigen Stadtbild Babels. Da fuhr der Satanas in ihn, und er hob an zu prahlen und zu lästern: „Das ist die große Babel“ usw. Es ist wahr, groß und überaus herrlich hatte er Babel ausgebaut. Die Ruinen dieser Stadt erstrecken sich über viele Quadratmeilen. Um die Stadt hatte er sehr hohe und breite Mauern aufgeführt. Kein Wunder, daß sich Belsazar so sicher fühlte. Um die Mauern lief ein breiter, tiefer Wallgraben, mit Ziegeln und wasserdichtem Zement ausgelegt. Denken wir noch an die hängenden Gärten, die er zu Ehren seiner medischen Gemahlin anlegen ließ, an den Palast des Sonnengottes und anderer Herrlichkeiten mehr, so gestehen wir, daß es eine „große Babel“ war, die unter ihm ausgebaut wurde. Nun kommt der Frevel: Durch seine große Macht hat er das getan und zur Ehre seines Namens, nicht des Gottes, dem er einst schon Ehre gegeben hatte. Doch kaum ist das Frevelwort über seine Lippen, da schlägt ihn Gott nieder. — Während der letzten hundert Jahre sind großartige Fortschritte in der Welt gemacht worden. Gott hat den Menschen unserer Tage viel Weisheit und Macht gegeben; er hat sie eindringen lassen in große, bis dahin verborgene Geheimnisse der Natur. Dies aber hat nicht dazu gedient, wie man hätte erwarten sollen, daß sie Gott mehr und mehr die Ehre gäben und sprächen: Ps. 139, 14. Sie sind Nebukadnezar gleich: sie schreiben sich alle Ehre zu, leugnen Gott und setzen sich an seine Stelle. So hören wir freveln die Sieger im Weltkrieg, Chemiker, Erfinder, Ärzte, große Geschäftsleute, Bankiers, oft auch Arbeiter und Farmer. Es ist die Prahlerei Nebukadnezars: Ich habe das vollbracht. Mir die Ehre! Ist es ein Wunder, daß Gott oft mit starkem Arm eingreift und Menschen und Menschenwerk zertrümmert?

b. B. 28—30. Nebukadnezar ein Tier des Feldes. „Zu Ehren meiner Majestät“, war noch auf seiner Zunge, da hörte er den heiligen Wächter rufen: „Dein Königreich soll dir genommen wer-

den!“ Der Schrecken Gottes überfiel ihn und lähmte ihn; sein Verstand verfinsterte sich; das menschliche Herz verwandelte sich in ein tierisches; er fühlte sich als Tier, nicht mehr als Mensch. Palast — Viehweide! Er ward an Gebärden als ein Tier erfunden. Welch ein Wechsel aus Gottes Zorn! Wie kann Gott die Mächtigsten so schnell stürzen, sie in den Staub werfen! Beispiele in unserer Zeit sind nicht schwer zu finden. Noch heute tut das Gott, daß er Wahnsinn (Menschen zu Gott machen) mit Wahnsinn schlägt: Gott — Tier!

2.

a. B. 31. 32. Die Genesung. Nachdem die von Gott bestimmte Strafzeit um war, gab ihm Gott seinen Verstand wieder, und wohl sein jämmerliches Aussehen brachte ihm die Stimme des Wächters ins Gedächtnis; das letzte, was er als vernünftiger Mensch gehört hatte: die Ankündigung der Strafe! Auch die Worte B. 29. So ist es das erste, was er tut: er preist den Ewigen, Gewaltigen des ewigen Reiches; er schließt sich ein in die Zahl derer, die „nichts zu rechnen sind“ gegen den Gott, der stürzen und erhöhen kann; dem niemand wagen darf zu sagen: „Was machst du?“ — Ja, wenn Gott durch schauerliche Ereignisse in der Natur, in großen Völkerumwälzungen eingreift, kommt manchem stolzen Atheisten unaufhaltsam das Wort aus dem Munde: O Gott, o Gott! Da zwingt Gott die Frevler, ihre völlige Ohnmacht einzugestehen, wenn sie zitternd und bebend warten der Dinge, die kommen sollen auf Erden. Das wird nach Christi Wort sehr stark in den Schrecken der letzten Tage geschehen, wenn „heulen werden alle Geschlechter der Erde“.

b. B. 33. 34. Wieder Weltregent. Unter Gottes sonderlicher Regierung haben die Gewaltigen in Babel keinen neuen König auf den Thron gebracht. Sobald Nebukadnezar zur Vernunft gekommen ist, kann er die Zügel der Regierung wieder in die Hand nehmen. Seine Gewaltigen liegen ihm zu Füßen; seine Macht und Herrlichkeit wird noch größer als zuvor. Wie gut ist doch Gott gegen ihn! Wie soll ihn seine Güte in rechter Buße erhalten! — Noch heute läßt Gott auf Strafgerichte sehr oft eine neue Blütezeit folgen. Er hat es damit auf das Heil der Menschen abgesehen. Bei nur wenigen jedoch erreicht er den seligen Zweck. Die meisten sind den neun Ausfägigen gleich: sie vergessen Gottes Güte sehr schnell, wenn es ihnen wieder gut geht. Denken wir nur an uns selber, wenn Gott die Trübsal wendet, wenn uns sein Antlitz wieder gnädiglich leuchtet, wie wir dann wieder in das alte Wesen verfallen, in Herz, Haus, Gemeinde und Synode.

c. B. 34. Das Lob Gottes. Wie herzensewarm klingen doch die Worte des Lobes Gottes! Weise, gerecht, mächtig ist der König vom Himmel, all sein Tun, alle seine Wege, seine Strafgerichte. — Das ist das letzte, was uns die Heilige Schrift von Nebukadnezar berichtet. Wir möchten so gern glauben, daß dieser von Gott so begnadete Mann ge-

rettet und als bußfertiger Sünder selig geworden ist. Die Schrift sagt nichts über sein Ende. Oder sollte er doch durch Abfall verlorengegangen sein, an dem Gott seine Macht und Gnade so herrlich und wiederholt bewiesen hat? Wir werden es sehen, wenn wir vor Gott treten. — Wir kennen Gott, seinen Willen und sein Tun, im Lichte des Neuen Testaments besser als Nebukadnezar. Gottes Gnade und Güte strahlt hell in Christo Jesu, unserm Seligmacher. Mit seinem Sohn hat er uns alles geschenkt. Unser Leben sollte billigerweise ein steter Lobpreis Gottes sein. Sage die drei Artikel andächtig her — da hast du die lange Liste all der Wohlthaten Gottes, die er dir täglich erzeigt. Ist das nicht des Dankens wert? Das alles ohne unser Verdienst und Würdigkeit, aus purlauterer väterlicher, göttlicher Güte und Barmherzigkeit! Dringt uns nicht das zum Lobe Gottes? Aber wie steht es mit mir, mit dir? Klingt wirklich überwallend aus deinem Herzen Lied 349, 1?

M. Piehler.

Dan. 5.

Nebukadnezar starb 561 vor Christi Geburt. Auf ihn folgten einige Herrscher, die nur wenige Jahre regierten. Dann bestieg Nabonnedus den Thron, ein Schwiegersohn Nebukadnezars, und dieser setzte seinen ältesten Sohn Belsazer, also einen Enkel Nebukadnezars, zum Mitregenten in Babylon ein. Wie hat man das Buch Daniel der historischen Unwahrheit beschuldigt! Aber wie immer, so berichtet die Bibel auch hier die Wahrheit. Unser Text zeigt, wie Gottes Gericht mit Nebukadnezars Haus aufräumte, und daß schon unter dem Enkel, nach wenigen Jahren, der „goldene Kopf“ zerbrochen wurde. Belsazer ist ein warnendes Beispiel für alle Spötter und Lästerer. Unser Text ruft mit lauter Stimme:

Irre dich nicht, Belsazer, Gott läßt sich nicht spotten!

1. Du erfrechst dich bei deinem Saufgelage, Gottes zu spotten.
2. Durch die Geheimschrift an der Wand wird dir dein Lästermaul gestopft.
3. Das vernichtende Strafgericht wird dich schnell ereilen.

1.

a. B. 1. 2. Das Saufgelage. Das Fest, an welchem Belsazers tausend Gewaltige usw. teilnahmen, artete in ein wüstes Saufgelage aus. Luther sagt sehr richtig: „Soff sich voll mit ihnen.“ Spr. 23, 31—33 beschreibt genau, wie es dabei zugeht; auch Röm. 13, 13. 14. Auf Treiben und Saufen folgt „Kammern und Unzucht“! So „feierte“ Belsazer in der schwerbelagerten Stadt. — Die Schrift warnt so ernstlich vor der Sünde des Saufens. Wir haben jetzt Prohibition, aber trotzdem lesen wir so viel von Saufgelagen im Großen und Kleinen. Auch Mädchen beteiligen sich daran. Den Mädchen, die nicht trinken

wollen, kommt man mit einem "I dare you!" Sie wollen sich nicht „beschämen“ lassen und trinken. Ihrer Sinne nicht mächtig, fallen sie Wüstlingen zum Opfer. Auf Saufen folgt „unordentliches Wesen“. Kein Wunder, daß man so viel hört von schändlicher Unzucht, Vergewaltigung, ja Lustmord. Junge Leute, laßt euch nicht verführen! Hütet euch auch vor herausfordernder Kleidung und demgemäßen Benehmen! Großes Weh folgt der Lust! Wandelt vor Gott und seid fromm!

b. B. 3. 4. Die greuliche Lasterung. „Dein Herz wird verkehrte Dinge reden.“ Wir sehen's: die heiligen Tempelgefäße werden herbeigeschafft, um daraus zu saufen. Sie spotten des Gottes Israels als eines überwundenen Gottes. Sie sprechen, wie Goliath, dem Gott Israels Hohn. Sie bringen Trankopfer aus auf ihre Götter, ihnen geben sie Ehre für die Unterwerfung Israels und der andern Völker, obwohl das Reich schon den Medern und Persern gegeben war. — So wird auch jetzt noch der Heilige und das Heilige verspottet. Man fordert Gott heraus durch wilde Flüche und Lasterungen. Sogar „Prediger“ spotten und lästern über Lehren der Heiligen Schrift. Viele Bibelsprüche werden in reinem Spott angeführt. Vom Unnützlichfühlen des heiligen Namen Gottes sind auch Glieder unserer Gemeinden nicht frei. Man hört Fluchen, leichtfertiges Anrufen Gottes: „Gott!“ „O Gott!“ leichtfertiges Schwören sowie davon, daß manche sich des „Besprechens“ bedienen. Manche meinen, sie können andere Götter in der Hogen preisen helfen. Gottes Mühlen mahlen langsam, und daraus schließen viele, daß man ungestraft Gott Hohn sprechen könne. Doch irret euch nicht!

2.

a. B. 5—9. Gottes Finger an der Wand. Dem tollen, lästerlichen Treiben Belfazers und seiner Mächtigen wird urplötzlich von Gott ein mächtiges Halt geboten. In Geheimschrift tut Gott sein zermalmendes Urtheil kund. An der Wand, im Lichte des Leuchters, schreibt eine Hand. Der König sieht es, und die Folge beschreibt B. 6 drastischer, als wir es tun können. Seine Gedanken erschrecken ihn; sein Gewissen schreit laut: „Der gelästerte Gott redet! Das gilt dir! Gedanke der Strafe Nebukadnezars!“ Plötzlich sind alle nüchtern — Feiglinge, wie alle frechen Prahler. „Die Weisen her!“ Sie kommen und werden zum drittenmal aufhängen. „Des erschraut“ usw., B. 9. Der König sinkt in sich zusammen, und seine Kriegsgewaltigen beben wie Espenlaub. Gott redet — Schrecken überfällt die Frebler! — Gottes Finger hat in der Bibel geschrieben; helle, klare Worte sind es. Sein Urtheil ist publiziert über die Gottlosen. Er sitzt im Himmel und lacht und spottet der Spötter. Sein eiserneszepter ist zum vernichtenden Schlag erhoben. Gott läßt plötzlich einen Schrecken fallen auf die frechen Sünder. Wenn er Zeichen des Endgerichts ergehen läßt, so erbleichen sie. Im Lastermaul klappern die Zähne. Als Feiglinge werden sie offenbar. Das Gewissen der Lasterer erschreckt sie, bestätigt Gottes Urtheil über sie.

b. B. 10—16. Der alten Königin Rat. Die Königinmutter hat den Tumult in ihren Gemächern gehört. Sie geht zum König. Sie, Nebukadnezars Weib, hat ähnliche Begebenheiten nicht vergessen. Sie erinnert daran, daß Daniel noch lebt, der „Knoten“ lösen kann, auch die verwickeltesten. Der hat den „Geist der heiligen Götter“. Daniel wird gerufen und kommt. Belsazer vergewissert sich erst, ob es der rechte Mann ist. Er verspricht ihm hohe Ehren. — So steht es noch heute. Wenn der Welt Weisheit in schweren Unglücksfällen versagt, dann wird der wohl oft mit Spott abgewiesene oder lange vergessene Pastor gerufen. Dann ist er der Mann. Wenn die Angst zum Verzweifeln treibt, wenn es im Gewissen heißt: „Zur Hölle muß ich sinken“, dann kann nur ein Diener Gottes raten und helfen. Oft aber schreit dann das Gewissen: „Zu spät!“ Viele Pastoren haben das erfahren, und Gemeindeglieder wissen auch wohl davon zu erzählen. Daniel, hilf!

3.

a. B. 17—24. Daniels scharfe Bußpredigt. Wie Moses und Elias einst vor Pharao und Ahab, so hebt auch Daniel mit harten Worten an. Behalte Geschenke und Ehre für andere! Mich locken diese nicht. Sie haben einen bitteren Beigeschmack, wie dein Haus mich hat erfahren lassen. Nach vielen hohen Diensten werde ich immer wieder vergessen, weil ich als Prophet des Höchsten gehandelt habe. Die Schrift will ich dir aber lesen. Doch höre zuvor: Gedenke deines Großvaters Macht und Herrlichkeit, B. 19; seines Hochmuts, B. 20; seiner tiefen Erniedrigung, B. 21. Obwohl du nun dies alles weißt, B. 22, hast du dennoch diesen Greuel angerichtet. Du hast es nicht in Unwissenheit getan wie andere Heiden; nichtige Götzen hast du gerühmt im Gegensatz zu dem Gott Himmels und der Erde, B. 23b. Du hast Gott gelästert; siehe 3 Mos. 24, 15. 16. Dort an der Wand steht dein Urtheil unwiderruflich geschrieben, B. 24. — Daniel sei unser Vorbild! Dann nur sind wir wahre Diener Gottes, wenn wir uns nicht scheuen, das Wort in seiner vollen Schärfe den sicheren Sündern zu sagen. Da lassen wir es oft leider fehlen. Wehe den falschen Propheten, die da „Friedel“ rufen und Ruhestiften machen für böse Gewissen; die da trösten, wo sie hart strafen sollten! Viele laufen den Weg der Sünde frech und sicher, trotzdem sie in unsern Schulen und Gotteshäusern das Wort Gottes gelernt haben und „alles wissen“, B. 22; obwohl sie am Altar Gottes gelobt haben, Gott allein zu dienen. Sie sind aber bald abgefallen, haben die Welt liebgewonnen, sind wohl unter den Tollen die Tollsten und haben sieben Teufeln das Haus geschmückt. Deren Gewissen schreit oft auf; laßt uns ihnen ein Daniel sein! Sie meiden die Kirchen, damit der Stachel nicht tiefer eingetrieben werde. Groß sind die Verluste unserer Gemeinden an solchen, die „es wohl wissen“! Wer Ohren hat zu hören, der höre!

b. B. 25—28. Die Deutung. Dieses „Mene, mene, tefel, upharfin“ ergeht noch täglich über Menschenkinder, die Gott verlassen

und den Götzen der Neuzeit dienen. Auch wir werden gewogen werden auf Gottes Wage. Nur in Christo wiegen wir schwer. Nur wer glaubt, wird selig werden.

c. B. 29c. 30. Vollzug des Strafgerichts. Das Strafgericht konnte der König nicht dadurch abwenden, daß er Daniel schmückte und ehrte. Er wurde getödtet, und sein Reich fiel an die Meder und Perser, noch in derselbigen Nacht, die mit Saufen und Lästern begonnen hatte. Es war zu spät — Gott wirkt die Buße, wann und wo er will. — Es ist schrecklich, in die Hände des lebendigen Gottes zu fallen und vielleicht von einem Sauf-, Tanz- und Gurengelage vor Gottes Gericht gefordert zu werden. Das geschieht noch heute! Wehe! Wer möchte so vor Gott treten als ein Teufelsdiener? Aus toller Lust in die ewige Qual! (Lied 433, 1. 4; 434.) Beachten wir wohl die Mahnung Gottes. Luk. 21, 34—36! Habt ihr Ohren zu hören? O hört, Gott redet! Flieht hin zu Christo! Bei ihm bleibt! R. Piehler.

Dan. 6.

B. 1—3. Darius ordnete die Verwaltung seines mächtigen Reiches mit großer Weisheit. Er theilte es in 120 Regierungsbezirke, über die er Landbögte setzte und über diese drei Fürsten. Einer dieser Fürsten war Daniel. Die Gottseligkeit ist eben zu allen Dingen nütze; das will Gott an Daniels Beispiel deutlich zeigen. Daniel übertraf die andern alle. Darius ließ darum die Absicht laut werden, Daniel über das ganze Reich zu setzen. Es ist ganz wunderbar, wie Gott den Kriegsgefangenen bis zu seinem Tode an der Spitze zweier Weltreiche erhält. Auch noch im dritten Jahre des Cyrus war er das. Das tat Gott auch zu dem Zweck, sein Wort von der Rückkehr der Juden aus der siebenjährigen Gefangenschaft zu erfüllen. Unter Cyrus fingen die Juden an, nach dem Lande ihrer Väter zurückzukehren. — Daniel blieb seinem Gott treu bis an den Tod, auch in der letzten, schweren Probe. Unser Text malt uns in glaubenstärkender Weise vor Augen:

Daniel, der große Prophet und Staatsmann, treu bis an den Tod.

1. Daniels hinterlistige Neider bringen ihn in die Löwengrube.
2. Sein Gott aber läßt es nicht zu, daß ihm ein Leid geschehe.

1.

a. B. 4. 5. Daniels Treue im Amt. Daniels Amts-genossen wollten nicht, daß er über sie herrsche. Sie beneideten ihn. Sie hielten es für ungerecht, daß der zweimal Unterjochte, der einem andern Gott diente, der nichts zur Größe des medischen Reiches beitragen hatte, über sie alle gesetzt sein solle. Mit Argusaugen überwachen sie ihn und suchen mit Fleiß, eine Sache an ihm zu finden. Sie fanden

nicht das Geringste, denn er war treu in allen Dingen. Es kann ja auch nicht anders sein. Wer Gott treu ist, kann nicht anders, als auch in Amt, Beruf und Arbeit treu sein. Herzensreligion und Lebenswandel stimmen immer überein. Nur bei Scheinchristen ist es anders. — So werden auch jetzt noch die der Welt als Christen Bekannte, unsere Gemeindeglieder, aufs schärfste überwacht. Was die Weltkinder als selbstverständlich ansehen, als erlaubt, ja als klug, das verurteilen sie an den Christen aufs schärfste. Mit Recht erwartet man von Christen eben etwas ganz anderes. Viel Schande kommt auf den Christennamen durch den Lebenswandel der Namenschristen. Christen müssen vor Menschenaugen untadelig dastehen. „Niemand unter euch leide als . . . ein Übeltäter!“ Hütet euch, ihr Alten und Jungen, daß ihr der Welt kein Ärgernis gebt, daß es nicht von euch heiße: Röm. 2, 23. 24. Schrecklich!

b. B. 5b—9. Die gestellte Falle. In seinem Gottesdienste wollen die Feinde Daniels ihn fangen und fällen. Schlau fangen sie es an. Sie wissen, daß Darius Schmeicheleien sehr zugänglich war. So bereden sie ihn, ein Gebot ausgeben zu lassen, daß dreißig Tage lang der König der einzige Gott sei, zu dem man beten dürfe. Das war den Medern, Persern, auch den Griechen und Römern nichts Auffallendes, da der König ihnen „ein Sprößling der Götter“, der „verkörperte Gott“, war. Der König, der die Bosheit, die dahintersteckte, nicht ahnte, hielt das Vorgeschlagene für gut, da es ihm eine feine Probe der Loyalität für die neu eroberten Völker zu sein schien. Die Verschwörer ließen den Befehl unwiderruflich machen durch des Königs Unterschrift und Siegel. Der König selbst konnte den Befehl nicht ändern, da er als „Gott“ sich nicht selbst widersprechen durfte. Die Falle war gestellt; Daniels Feinde frohlockten. — Viele halten das für unglaublich, daß man einem Volk so etwas aller Vernunft Hohn Sprechendes zumuten könne. Doch denken wir an die Unfehlbarkeitserklärung des Papstes im Jahre 1870, also an ein Geschehnis aus neuester Zeit. Wird diese Unfehlbarkeitserklärung nicht von allen Papstknecchten, auch den Gebildetsten, als Glaubensartikel angenommen? — Die Welt stellt den Christen Fallen mit unschuldig lächelndem Gesicht. Nur ein wenig nachlassen in Lehre und Leben; sich der modernen Welt in etwas anpassen — das sei ja alles. Man müsse sich den Anschauungen des Landes, in dem man lebe, anbequemen; das fordere die Loyalität, zu der man verpflichtet sei. Viele Gemeindeglieder gehen in die Falle.

c. B. 10. 11. Daniels Glaubensstreue. Daniel hörte von des Königs Gebot. Er wußte, auf wen es abgesehen war. Er besprach sich nicht mit Fleisch und Blut. Er suchte kein Gewissenspflaster: „Den König werde ich um nichts bitten; Gott hört das Beten im Verborgenen; ja er hört ungesprochene Herzensseufzer.“ Er tat, „wie er vorher zu tun pflegte“. Im Oberstockwerk seines Sommerhauses betete er kniend, laut, mit nach Jerusalem gewandtem Gesicht, dreimal des Tages. Sein

Gewissen sagte ihm: Unter diesen Umständen ist leise beten laut verleugnen. Seine Feinde lauschten nicht nur von außen, sondern kamen unter einem Vorwand bis in seine Gebetskammer. Auch dadurch ließ er sich nicht unterbrechen. So fanden sie ihn „in der That begriffen“. — Welch ein Vorbild für uns! O wir Kleingläubigen, wir Angstherzen! Wie oft wohl unterlassen wir unsere Tischgebete und unsere Hausandacht, wenn „Besuch“ da ist. Man könnte über unser altmodisches Wesen lachen! Oder man redet sich gar ein, man dürfe die Perlen nicht vor die Hunde und Säue werfen. Ist das Glaubenstreue, bekennen vor Menschen?

d. B. 12—15. Die Anklage. Daniels Feinde erinnern den König bis ins Kleinste an das von ihm erlassene Dekret. Der König bestätigt es nochmals, indem er hinzufügt: Keiner darf das Recht der Meder und Perser übertreten. Nun kommt der Blitz aus heiterem Himmel über den betrogenen Darius. Nun merkt er die Absicht. Sie betonen, nicht der Fürst, sondern „der Gefangene aus Juda“ hat gewagt, das heilige Recht der Meder und Perser zu übertreten. Er, der aus dem Staub Erhobene, wagt, den König und sein Gebot zu verachten. Er, der doch der Erste in Gehorsam sein sollte, geht mit so üblem Beispiel voran. Darius jedoch kennt seinen Daniel. Er weiß, der ist Gott und dem König treu. Bis an den Abend verhandelt er mit den Klägern. Umsonst! Sie geben nicht nach! Sie bestehen auf ihrem Recht! Der König, wie Pilatus, gibt aus Menschenfurcht nach. Drohend haben sie ihm zugerufen: B. 15. — Solche Anklagen sind je und je wider die Bekenner der wahren Religion erhoben worden. Man denke an die zehn Christenverfolgungen und an die Zeit der Reformation. Vor wenigen Jahren wurden wir wegen unserer Gottesdienste und unserer christlichen Jugenderziehung als unloyal verschrien. Es schmeckt noch bitter in unserm Munde.

2.

a. B. 16—19. Daniel im Löwenzwinger. Daniel wankt nicht. Er ist bereit, seinen Glauben mit dem Tode zu besiegeln. Der König ruft ihm einen gewiß von Herzen kommenden Wunsch nach. Der Stein wird versiegelt, so daß keiner ihm ein Leid zufügen, aber auch niemand ihm zu Hilfe kommen kann. Der König ist tief traurig. Der Palast liegt dunkel; keine Musik, kein Tanz der Weiber. Schlaflos wartet er der Morgendämmerung. Er hofft leise, wo keine Hoffnung zu sein scheint. — Tausende von Märtyrern sind Daniel hierin gefolgt. Kein Körnlein Weibrauch wollten sie den Göttern und Kaisern opfern. Sie starben in der Arena, von wilden Tieren zerrissen, verfaulten in Kerker, ließen sich in den Folterkammern zu Tode martern. Staunend groß wird die Menge derer sein, die die glänzende Märtyrerkrone tragen. — Und wir?! Wie oft verleugnen wir, wo wir frei bekennen sollten! Wie leicht hat uns Gott das Bekennen gemacht! Keine Todesstrafe mehr auf das Bekennen Christi gesetzt. Nur ein wenig Spott zu dulden

und vielleicht einige Dollars Schaden zu tragen. Aber die Freundschaft der Welt lockt so sehr! Aber merke: Der Welt Freund — Gottes Feind!

b. B. 20—23. Die Rettung. Auf den ersten Zuruf des Königs antwortet Daniel. Er lebt! Von heißhungrigen Löwen umringt; aber auch der Engel des Herrn umlagerte ihn. Daniel ruhte sicher, während der König vor Gewissensbissen und Angst wacht. Die „großen Ragen“ kuscheln sich vor ihm und fügen ihm kein Leid zu. Darius sieht es; er sieht die Allmacht Gottes. Das Geheimnis der Rettung? „Hat Gott vertraut“, B. 23. „Größer als der Helfer ist die Not ja nicht.“ Ja, Gott kann vom Tode erretten. Läßt er aber die Seinen sterben, so ererben sie schnell die Seligkeit. Ihr Blut ist der Same der Kirche. Wir haben gelobt, um des Bekenntnisses Christi willen auch den Martertod zu leiden. Aber ach, wir sind so oft dem Petrus gleich! Gottes Kraft ist jedoch in den Schwachen mächtig. Wir wollen darum beten: Lied 164, 15. 16.

c. B. 24—27. Die Folgen. Die Reider fallen in die Grube, die sie Daniel gegraben haben, Spr. 26, 27; Ps. 7, 15. 16; 9, 15. 16. Nach der Perser Recht mußten die Familien mitsterben, wenn Verschwörung gegen den König vorlag. So sieht es Darius an. Schauerliches Ende! Aber: Gal. 6, 7! — So geht es den Feinden Gottes schon hier. Aber wehe ihnen erst recht dort im Pfuhl! — Der König lobt Gott. Alle sollen ihn fürchten. Aber er sagt nicht, daß sie nun vom Gözendienst ablassen sollen. — Auch wir loben Gott, daß er Daniel so wunderbar geführt und ihn so treu erhalten hat bis ans Ende, das nun bald folgen sollte; und wie er die Verheißung der Gottseligkeit hier schon herrlich erfahren hat, so soll ihm die herrlichere werden in jenem Leben. Sein ganzes Leben ist Beweis dafür, daß die Gottseligkeit zu allen Dingen nütze ist. Folgen wir ihm darin! Wir flehen: Lied 174, 1.

R. Piehler.

Repulsive Antics.

In a Lutheran pulpit a Lutheran preacher shocked his hearers by remarking: "I know something that cleanses even better than the Gold Dust Twins. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cleanses us from all sins." Banal! By such comparisons the holiest things are dragged down to the level of the commonest.

Another Lutheran preacher aimed at illustrating the imitative habits of children and sought to induce their elders to set good examples. He told the story of a little boy — let us call him Billie — who secretly took mother's shears from her work-basket and just as secretly went about clipping as much of his hair as he was able to reach. The astonished mother met the little fool with the question: "Billie, why, on earth, did you do that?" And Billie answered: "I wanted to be like father." With a twinkle in his eyes and with

a smile playing around his mouth, the preacher came to the sublime climax of his story by remarking: "Remember, Billie's father was bald-headed." And now his hearers could giggle. A splendid oratorical triumph! The people with hungering souls had once again been thoroughly edified by hearing one of those trite stories told at the expense of the bald-headed man, which are as numerous as the jokes current about a certain brand of auto. Of course, all the bald-headed men in the audience took this story in good grace, if they still felt friendly to the pastor. But if not, then the pastor reduced his usefulness about fifty per cent.

Still another Lutheran pastor aimed at illustrating the truly lofty, because Biblical, truth that Jesus is not only the Lion out of Judah, but also the Lamb of God, who, in His great mercy, has compassion on the poor sinner. He told the story of two dog-fanciers standing before a lion's cage, each holding a bull-dog in leash. The one suggested a battle royal between the two brutes. The other agreed to the fray. The dogs battled viciously. The one was badly torn and bruised. The disgusted owner of this beaten brute thereupon threw his dog into the cage as food for the lion. At first the shaggy beast shrank from the bleeding, panting creature, but then gradually approached it and showed its feeling by licking its wounds. And now the preacher came to the application of his fascinating story and triumphantly remarked: "Thus our Lord Jesus is not only the Lion out of Judah, fierce in His wrath to His enemies, but also the Lamb of God, who stoops down to us and pours out His love upon us in our misery." — Would you use such an illustration to exhibit the divine qualities of our great and glorious Savior? Even the use to which the dog is here put reminds one very strongly of the inelegant comparisons by Zinzendorf.

"Forget not the benefits of the Lord," was the noble strain heard in a sermon by a Lutheran pastor. But what a taste he left in the mouths of his friends when he made the following story serve his purpose: A young lover was sitting on a river bank together with his sweetheart. "Young lovers will do that some time," the speaker injected; and some of his hearers repaid him amply by smiling. Presently the young lady saw a flower carried along by the water. She challenged her lover by asking him to bring her that flower. And the enraptured fool sprang into the water, but began to sink. And as he was being engulfed by the dark waters of the stream, he threw the coveted prize at her with his last message: "Forget me not." And now the preacher used language something like this: "Thus the benefits of God which you have enjoyed these past — years cry to you: 'Forget Me not.'" What an arrant fool this lover was! And this fool story was introduced to remind us of our duty to be grateful to God for past blessings! *O si tacuisses!*

Now let us turn from the ridiculous to the lofty. A certain Lutheran pastor took the writer by surprise by saying twice in one sermon: "Now let me tell you a story" and by refraining from doing the usual thing, *i. e.*, telling an anecdote. He twice told stories that were in a class by themselves, two stories from the Bible, which illustrated as aptly as could be done the truths which the preacher was presenting. Could you find any better? Do you study your Bible to find such stories?

B.

Book Review.

The Concordia Cyclopedia. A Handbook of Religious Information, with Special Reference to the History, Doctrine, Work, and Usages of the Lutheran Church. *L. Fuerbringer, D. D., Th. Engelder, D. D., P. E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., D. D., Editors-in-Chief.* Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 848 pages, 9×5¾×1¼. Price, \$4.50.

The editors, the associate editors, and our synodical printery, after seven years of arduous labor, have completed a volume that will serve admirably in presenting history, doctrine, and church-work from a Lutheran viewpoint. "The first one to suggest and outline the work" was Prof. Th. Graebner. Many will be grateful to him for his endeavors because of the repeated disappointments experienced in consulting other encyclopedias with their misrepresentation, preeminently of Lutheran doctrine. The *Concordia Cyclopedia* on the shelves of private and public libraries will now spread trustworthy information regarding the Lutheran Church. We have been trying to find faults in the book, but our first serious attempts at this necessary task have proved fruitless. The printer has done his work well. The editors have covered the pages of the volume with succinct and apposite reading-matter. The brevity of the articles will meet with general approval and make the book a real *Handbuch*. The treatises on various lodges will offer much helpful guidance. Even the German order of Harugari is not overlooked. We would offer one suggestion, a change in the title, *viz.*, *The Concordia Lutheran Cyclopedia*. The name Lutheran on the back of the book will mean more to the general public than the name Concordia.

Half a Century of Lutheranism Among Our Colored People. By *Christopher F. Drewes.* Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 75 cts.

The cover, the type, the numerous illustrations, and, above all, the story of the fifty years of work among the Negroes of our country will make this book one of the few which record a phase of the history of our Church for posterity and to the glory of God. Listening to the vivid presentation of the history of Missouri's activities in Southern Wisconsin by Prof. Otto Hattstaedt at the recent convention of the Southern Wisconsin District, we were more than ever impressed with our duty to write, or cause to be written, the remarkable deeds of God as we see them portrayed in the lives of our fathers. We believe many others are desirous of seeing this task performed and will therefore thank the author for writing the story of our missionary labors among the freedmen of our land. We heartily recommend the book to our congregations.

Modernism vs. the Bible. Modernism Not Modern. The False Premises of Modernism. The Destructive Tendencies of Modernism. KFUO Tracts 5, 6, 7, and 8. By *Walter A. Maier*, Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price: Single copies, 5 cts.; 100, \$1.25; 1,000, \$11.00, and postage.

Modernism is the talk of the day. Its baneful influence is noticeable far and wide. It must be fought with all weapons at our disposal, and the tracts here offered will do much to convince the Christian of its grave dangers to the immortal souls of men and of the importance of combating this diabolical error of Modernism by spreading these tracts widely.

Certificate Booklets for Baptisms, Confirmations, and Weddings.

Two different sizes. German or English. Price: Small size, 20 cts.; large size, 30 cts.

Concordia Publishing House, in these booklets, satisfies the demands of a fastidious public for something truly attractive. We have found that people want just such mementos as these to recall particular days and events in their lives.

Funeral Hymns. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 30 cts.; dozen, \$2.88, and postage.

These 29 funeral hymns with notes, bound in a neat cover, will be put to good use especially at funerals held in homes, chapels, or funeral parlors. Our people, in many cases, fail to bring their hymn-books to funerals. But it is of great importance that just at such occasions they should voice those comforting truths contained in our hymns for their own good and for the good of others. May every congregation get a sufficient supply of this collection of hymns!

Qualifying Men for Church-Work. By *Gerrit Verkuyl, Ph. D.* Fleming H. Revell Co., New York. Price, \$1.50.

Dr. Gerrit Verkuyl, Ph. D. (Leipzig), is the Field Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education and in former years issued a number of handy volumes upon devotional and practical church-work. He is thoroughly familiar with his subject and is acquainted with a veritable library of books which treat the subjects upon which he dilates in these 204 pages. Not the least valuable part of the book is its methodical plan of divisions and the indication of these divisions by headings of chapters, spread type at the beginning of a new paragraph, or marking with figures or letters the points which need attention under any one heading. There are ten chapters: I. Demands for Christian Men; II. Latent Christian Man-Power; III. The Genius of Christian Leadership; IV. Qualities of Noted Bible Characters; V. Hindrances; VI. Finding and Instructing Workers; VII. Training, and Working with, Workers; VIII. Self-training; IX. Modern Quality Contrasts; X. Leadership Christward. These chapters are again subdivided. For instance, the chapter on "The Genius of Christian Leadership" is divided as follows: Introduction: I. Illustrative Instances of Leadership; II. Grades of Leadership; III. Leadership Qualifications. And under this head again are mentioned: (1) Ability to Lead; (2) Followers of the Leader; (3) All for Each and Each for All; (4) Equality; (5) Inspiration; (6) Program; (7) Choosing Successors; (8) Vision. IV. The Position of a Leader; V. Leadership Genius Is Essentially Christian. Then at the end of each chapter there are suggestions for private study and class-work, followed by collateral reading and day-by-day selections from Holy Scripture.

We are far from endorsing everything that this man has to say, but we consider him a poor leader in church-work who could find nothing stimulating or helpful in these pages.

S.